

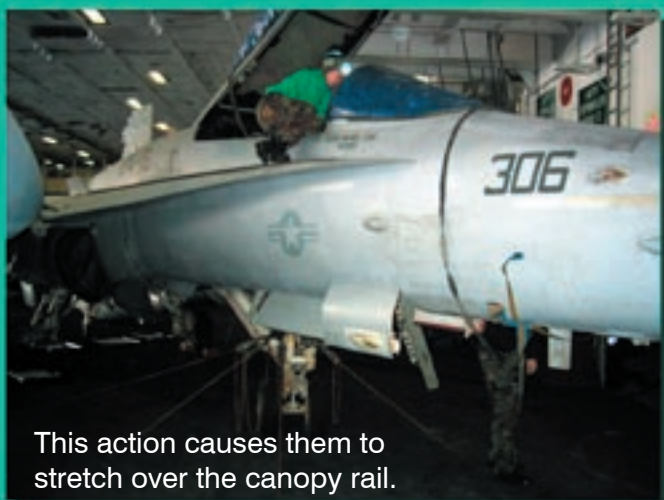
# Canopy Capers

By Lt. Justin Hendrickson

Maintainers often reach into the cockpit.



This action causes them to stretch over the canopy rail.



The day started innocently enough. The carrier steamed under a small patch of gray clouds, and a light sprinkle fell to the deck. The flight-deck chief yelled for his plane captains to close the canopies as the rain started to come down hard. The plane captains, taking great pride in the condition of their jets, scrambled to their Hornets to close the canopies. For one unlucky airframer, the rush to keep the cockpit dry almost cost her life.

The airframer was working around the starboard side of the cockpit area with her body halfway in the cockpit. The canopy suddenly came down on her lower back, pinning and subjecting her to excruciating pain. A plane captain heard her screams and quickly raised the canopy off the airframer before any permanent damage was done. She was lucky to escape the incident with only a sore back and a few days of light duty.

This isn't the first time this has happened. Fast forward to the next cruise. This time, the scene of the accident was the hangar bay. In an effort to do

a little housekeeping, another maintainer got "the squeeze" put on him. The victim was an AME who just had finished installing a kick panel. The canopy came down on him, and, this time, the person lowering the canopy did not hear the AME's screams.

When a canopy is closed without a quick look at the cockpit, a serious injury can occur.



The maintainer did notice the canopy would not close all the way, so he raised it a bit and again tried to lower it—much to the chagrin of the AME getting crushed on the other side of the cockpit. The AME's shouts finally were heard, and he was freed from the grip of the canopy. He was shaken but not injured.

People are not the only items endangered. By not taking time to check the canopy railing, you can damage the ejection-seat SEAWARS Koch fittings and the canopies. This careless attitude wastes maintenance time and money.

Rushing the job is the common theme in these two near-disasters. Closing a canopy is a simple job, but steps still must be followed. The simple act of clearing both canopy rails of personnel and equipment before moving the switch can prevent a grave injury. Maintainers can take personal and material safety into their own hands: Disconnect the cannon plug for canopy power or pull the battery circuit breaker before doing maintenance around the cockpit area.

Our squadron was lucky in these two cases. Maintainers and aircrew alike have been injured seriously from canopy mishaps. Don't let it happen to you!

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